

## **Sustain Mid Maine Coalition**

### **Public Policy Team**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**January 26, 2015**

The meeting started at about 6:35 at the Winslow Public Library.

**Members present:** Elery Keene, Tom Tietenberg, Jane Edwards, Rob Ellis, and Dick Thomas.

Jane chaired the meeting. Minutes were taken by Elery.

**Minutes:** Tom made a motion to approve the minutes of December 1, 2013. The motion was seconded by Rob. Approval was unanimous.

Dick suggested that in the future we start our meetings at 6:00 p.m. instead of 6:30. He usually has to leave at 7:00 and he could participate in more of the meeting. It was decided to do this for future meetings.

#### **Discussion of Activities:**

**Jane Edwards** said that Peter was absent because of illness. She reported on a meeting of an E2 Tech that he went to at Maple Hill Farms in Hallowell. The Director of the Governor's energy office was there. So were most of the members of state legislative committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. Most of the members of this committee this two year session are different than the members for the last two year session. This seemed to be a good orientation for them.

**Elery Keene** reported on some things he learned from Mike Stoddard of Efficiency Maine at the annual meeting of SMMC. Currently Efficiency Maine does not normally offer funding to encourage utilization of solar panels to produce electricity. However, Mike did explain that funding was provided for a research project in the Boothbay area to solve a transmission capacity problem. Demand for electricity has been growing in the Boothbay area to the point where additional transmission capacity would be needed. It was less costly to help pay for the cost generating electricity with solar panels, in the Boothbay area, than to install additional transmission line capacity. So this was done. After the meeting he told Elery and Jane that demand in the Waterville area was growing and would soon need additional transmission capacity. It might be possible to generate solar electricity with Efficiency Maine grants here also, to avoid the cost of building additional transmission capacity.

**Dick Thomas** talked about a meeting of about 30 people at the Waterville library who got training for how to use civil disobedience in an effective way. This may soon be used to encourage federal officials to decide not to approve construction of the Keystone pipeline in the Midwest that is proposed to move fracked petroleum from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. This training may also be used to express dissatisfaction related to other climate change issues.

**Dick Thomas** also mentioned that Susan Collins will be speaking about climate change at a meeting in Portland, Maine on February 21. If anyone is interested they should sign up in advance because seating capacity is limited.

**Tom Tietenberg** used a report prepared by Pete Didisheim of the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) that identified issues that NRCM is interested in which will be considered by the Maine legislature this year. Several of them relate to Climate Change. Members present had copies of the report to help them understand these issues.

#### GOOD BILLS:

Four bills have been proposed to improve Maine's solar energy policies.

A bond authorization is being proposed so that Efficiency Maine can have more dollars now to fund weatherization assistance.

Three bills have been proposed to help communities prepare for the impacts of climate change.

Bills have been proposed to facilitate recharging stations for electric vehicles.

Other bond proposals would fund improvements for rail, bicycle, and pedestrian projects and investments in state parks.

#### BAD BILLS:

One proposal would weaken mineral mining environmental regulations. This issue has been discussed considerably during the last four years and rejected, but here it is again.

Another proposal would be opposition to Maine's renewable energy policies that facilitate solar and wind electricity production.

Another would weaken the state building code which requires that new buildings meet appropriate standards for weatherization – being efficient to heat at low cost.

#### INSIDE LEPAGE ADMINISTRATION:

A good thing: A new report has been completed on the topic of preparing for the problems that are happening and will happen because of the effects of climate change.

A Climate Change specialist will be hired to work at DEP to assist “identifying, coordinating, and assisting efforts within the Department and at state, regional, and municipal levels regarding climate adaptation and resiliency”.

**Rob Ellis** shared a draft of a statement that he would like to submit to the newspaper as an op-ed piece. It proposes that a strong effort be made to produce more solar energy in the Waterville area to replace energy which is currently being produced from fossil fuels. Other members like this idea. He was given some suggestions to improve his draft.

**Elery Keene** suggested that rebuilding the Winslow dam on the Sebasticook River might be another good investment to replace electricity currently being generated by burning fossil fuel. This has been discussed by a small group of Winslow residents involved with SMMC.

**Tom Tietenberg** noted that he had attended a meeting of the Sustain Mid Maine Energy Committee where the committee was briefed on a promising new technology that might prove appropriate for the Kennebec River in Waterville. That technology – an Archimedes Screw -- involves an innovative gravity fed underwater turbine that generates electricity and is supposed to have less impact on fish passage than a conventional dam. We were told it has been used with some success in Europe. The local person who knows the most about it is Mark Kierstead. ([mkierstead@fgclegal.com](mailto:mkierstead@fgclegal.com))

The meeting ended at about 7:50.

The next meeting will be February 23, 2015 at the Winslow library.

Elery Keene